

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

May 14, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretaries Vilsack and Burwell:

We write in support of the expert committee report that forms the basis for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). The DGA is a critical tool for efforts to improve public health, and to decrease Americans' risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer, tooth decay and other chronic diseases. In addition to contributing to efforts to save lives, it is also an important measure to address the soaring health care costs in the nation. Obesity and related diseases are responsible for an estimated \$190 billion in annual health care costs in America. More than 20 percent of these costs are paid publicly through the Medicare and Medicaid programs, totaling more than \$38 billion a year of taxpayer dollars.

The experts on the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee based their report on the best available scientific evidence for what constitutes healthful diets for Americans through the utilization of a rigorous, evidence-based evaluation process. The basic nutrition advice in the Guidelines has been largely unchanged for years. Also unchanged, unfortunately, has been the public's consistent under-consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, often due to lack of access and affordability, and over-consumption and over-promotion of foods associated with many of the chronic diseases burdening our constituents. Given this continuing disconnect, the report also rightly translates the evidence-based science in the report into public health policy recommendations. These should be reflected in the final Guidelines to ensure that the government's sound nutrition science results in health-promoting, actionable changes that serve the public health goals of federal, state and local stakeholders.

The final Guidelines should emphasize healthy dietary patterns, helpful shifts in the food environment, and help to address the over-consumption of added sugars, sodium, and saturated

fats, while urging greater consumption of healthy foods and beverages, including fruits, vegetables, water, and whole grains. In addition, you should retain the Committee's science-based recommendations to eat less red and processed meat, which are based on numerous studies showing the links between over-consumption of these foods and both heart disease and certain cancers.

The Committee's report made self-evident the connections between the health of our environment and the health of the American food supply. We support the Committee's consideration of sustainability, which is grounded in well-founded concerns for current and long-term food security, in its recommendations. The DGAC report discusses sustainability only as it directly relates to nutrition and food security, and not as a general topic, making its conclusions a legitimate subject within the scope of the committee's assignment. Moreover, it used the sustainability analysis appropriately: nutrition evidence supporting its basic dietary recommendations was supplemented with evidence showing that the healthiest dietary patterns are also the most sustainable.

We urge you to resist the politics surrounding the publication of the report and to issue strong guidelines that reflect scientific evidence, address the nation's obesity and chronic disease epidemic, and advance our public health.


Sincerely,

  
ROSA L. DeLAURO  
Member of Congress

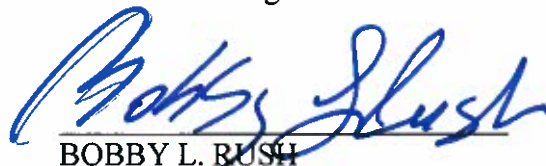
  
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